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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2664

May 27, 1994

FORMER USSR -- U.S. agricultural exports to the nations of the former USSR are forecast at \$1.3 billion, down 17 percent from 1993, and down 50 percent from 1992. Barring a significant crop shortfall this year, imports to the region are likely to continue at a low level for the foreseeable future. Even with a sharp drop in grain imports, the former USSR remains among the world's largest grain buyers. Economic restructuring, reduced grain use caused by declines in livestock inventories, high debt, and large budget deficits have left former USSR governments less able to import agricultural commodities. However, high-value agricultural imports are beginning to increase and are likely to grow as market reforms increase productivity and economic recovery begins. **Contact: Christian Foster (202) 219-0620.**

WHEAT EXPORTS -- U.S. wheat exports during the 1994/95 season are forecast to decline 1 million tons to 32 million tons as a result of stagnant global demand and intense competition on the world market. Canada's wheat exports are forecast to rebound to 19 million tons as larger supplies of better quality wheat and ample supplies of durum boost Canada's marketing program. World wheat trade is projected at 97.6 million tons, about the same level as the 1993/94 season. **Contact: Sara Schwartz (202) 219-0824.**

COARSE GRAIN EXPORTS -- U.S. coarse grain exports in 1994/95 are expected to increase by 3 million tons to nearly 40 million tons. The increase is expected to come mostly from the corn export forecast of 34 million tons. U.S. coarse grain production is forecast to rebound to 249 million tons, 61.6 million more than last year's weather reduced crop. Foreign coarse grain production is expected to remain unchanged at 597 million tons. **Contact: Peter Riley (202) 219-0824.**

POTATO EXPORTS -- U.S. exports of potatoes and potato products have more than doubled in value over the last five years, reaching a record \$402 million in fiscal 1993. The biggest markets are Japan, mainly french fries, and Canada, the primary market for fresh potatoes. Exports last year to the former Soviet Union grew 20-fold. The largest product category is frozen french fries, increasing 62 percent in five years to a record high of \$149 million last year. The fastest growing product category is potato chips, with U.S. exports up 500 percent since 1989 to a record \$118 million. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade will open more markets for U.S. potato producers. **Contact: Gary Lucier (202) 219-0884.**

REDUCING MUD -- A plastic grid, originally designed to reinforce weak soil in the construction of roads, can improve muddy conditions around feed and water troughs and at cattle gates. Researchers at the University of Georgia have found that the grid keeps gravel from sinking into the mud, maintaining the ground drier and firmer, and the cattle cleaner. The grid costs about \$270 for a roll 9.8 feet by 168 feet. **Contact: Joe Garner (706) 485-6015.**

NEW POTATOES -- The fungus that caused the Irish potato famine in the 1840's has been found in the United States. Late blight, the most destructive disease of potatoes worldwide, can destroy a potato crop in only a few weeks time. Producers have been controlling the fungus with chemicals, but the version discovered in the U.S. is a more aggressive strain. USDA scientists have developed potato breeding lines that resist the fungus. Using genetic engineering, leaf cells from wild potato species were fused with cells from a cultivated potato. The lines will be used to develop commercial potato varieties. **John Helgeson (608) 264-5276.**

BOOSTING ALFALFA YIELDS -- Farmers in eight states will be conducting field trials of an alfalfa seed containing a genetically altered bacteria. Plants such as alfalfa use bacteria that convert nitrogen into a form the plant can use. The new seed bacteria was engineered to have additional copies of its own genes, increasing its ability to convert atmospheric nitrogen and thereby increase yields. The seeds have been tested in greenhouses for six years, and another four years outdoors. The field trials in California, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. **Contact: David Giamporcaro (202) 260-6362.**

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP -- About one percent of the 1.3 billion acres of privately owned farm and forest land in the United States is owned by foreign persons, an increase of 140,141 acres during 1993. Forest land accounts for nearly half of all foreign-owned acreage, cropland about 17 percent, pasture and other agricultural land about 32 percent. Corporations own 71 percent of the foreign owned acreage. U.S. corporations in which foreign persons have a significant interest or substantial control report owning half the foreign-held acreage. The largest number of acres owned by foreign persons is in Maine, totalling about 13 percent of the state's privately owned land. 35 percent of the acreage is in the west, and 34 percent in the south. Foreign persons are not taking purchased agricultural land out of production. **Contact: Peter DeBraal (202) 219-0425.**

EROSION REDUCTION -- Erosion on highly erodible lands will be reduced two-thirds from the amounts of 10 years ago when conservation plans are fully implemented on erodible cropland. Erosion from highly erodible cropland totalled an estimated 17.5 tons per acre in 1985. By the end of this year erosion will be reduced to 6 tons per acre. About 92 percent of the conservation plans on the affected land are being carried out on schedule. Paul Johnson, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service, says that agriculture is well on its way in carrying out the most intensive conservation effort ever undertaken on private lands. **Contact: Diana Morse (202) 720-4772.**

BLUEBERRIES INFO -- Blueberries can be an important income producer, grossing \$5,000 per acre. USDA's Office for Small-Scale Agriculture has produced an information sheet about growing blueberries. It includes topics such as site considerations, plant selection, field layout, planting, mulch and irrigation, crop management and marketing the crop. For a free copy of the information sheet "Blueberries" write to: Office of Small-Scale Agriculture, USDA, Ag Box 2244, Washington, D.C. 20250. **Contact: Bud Kerr (202) 401-1805.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

WEEKLY CASSETTE:

AGRICULTURE USA #1929 -- Information from a top expert on keeping your lawn green and beautiful this summer. **Brenda Curtis** talks with University of Maryland turf specialist **Tom Turner** about environmentally correct lawn care. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1410 -- Talking turkey; landscaping adds value to your home; ag-based stain removers; supermarket innovations; grass clippings. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1921 -- FSU grain imports down significantly; creating a market for kenaf; powdery mildew resistant kenaf; the "industrial farmer"; artificial diet put to test. (Weekly reel of features.)

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE:

Tuesday, June 7, weekly weather and crop outlook; Thursday, June 9, U.S. crop production report, world ag supply and demand; Friday, June 10, world ag production, world oilseed trade, world grain trade, world cotton trade, world tobacco trade, cotton & wool update. These are the **USDA** reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359

COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** has a five-part series explaining the new safe handling labels for meat.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop conditions.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on guayule rubber. **Lynn Wyvill** reports on food safety at the beach.

On satellite Galaxy 7, transponder 9, channel 9, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 3880 MHz.: Thursdays from 3:45 - 4:00 p.m., ET; Mondays 11:00 - 11:15 a.m., ET.

OFFMIKE

MOSQUITO...swarms are so thick that they clog radiators and blacken headlights, says **Ole Olson** (KSJB, Jamestown, ND). Standing water from storms last year, and warm temperatures during the spring, have boosted the pest's population. Planted crops are looking good, and in late May producers are getting in row crops.

BUYING CATTLE...and checking genetic programs were the main agenda of 40 Brazilian ranchers and agribusinessmen that toured the area, says **Dewey Nelson** (KRVN, Lexington, NE). The group also visited Wyoming, Kansas and Wisconsin. Dewey's station is covering the Gateway Farm Expo, in Kearney, NE. Exhibits of new equipment and technology, and shows for cattle, hogs and sheep are featured. Dewey says the area could use some rain. Strong winds have dried the topsoil, but subsoil remains adequate.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Gene Williams** (WNAX, Yankton, SD). He received the Mid-Am Salute Award for his coverage of agricultural news.

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Room 528A
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FARMERS...voiced their displeasure at a proposal to permanently remove two million acres of the state from production, says **Dan Molino** (Louisiana Agri-News Network, Baton Rouge, LA). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants to declare the acreage as critical habitat to preserve the Louisiana black bear. Don says sugar cane has recovered from the double whammy of a freeze three years ago and the hurricane of two years ago. The crop looks good this year.

IT'S COSTING PRODUCERS...to raise cattle these days, says **Kelly Lenz** (WIBW, Topeka, KS). Cow-calf producers have major concerns about profitability resulting from large numbers, delayed demand, and negative psychology of the market. Kelly says the combines should be rolling in June. The wheat crop looks good, acreage is up, and development is on schedule. Here's another example of a farm broadcaster serving their audience. Kelly is working on a video slide program for the Kansas FFA convention. It tells the story of seven Star farmers in the state.

SKIN CANCER...can result from damage to the skin caused by overlong exposure to the sun. Wear a hat with a broad brim to protect ears and neck. Baseball caps don't cover those areas.

VIC POWELL 
Office of Communications